

REMARKS

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided and for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Claim for Priority and Receipt of the certified copy of the priority documents in the Official Action.

Applicants additionally wish to thank the Examiner for considering the materials cited in the Information Disclosure Statement filed in the present application on December 13, 2006, by the return of the signed and initialed Form PTO-1449 attached to the above-noted Information Disclosure Statement.

Applicants would further like to thank the Examiner for indicating the allowability of claims 4-6 and 9-18 if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Upon entry of the present Response, claims 2-4, 6-10 and 15-18 will have been amended. Claims 2, 3, 7-10 and 15-18 will have been amended merely for cosmetic purposes (*i.e.*, for clarity and consistency), and should not be taken as having been made for purposes related to the patentability of the present application. Claims 4 and 6 will have been merely rewritten in independent form including the features of claim 1 and the indicated allowable subject matter of claims 4 and 6, respectively. No new matter will have been entered by the above-made amendments. Claim 1 will have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 2-18 are pending for consideration by the Examiner. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding objections and rejections of the claims pending in the present application. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate.

Objection to the Drawings

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner objected to the drawings asserting that Fig. 12 be labeled “Prior Art.” By the present response, Applicants have submitted a replacement sheet of drawings in which Fig. 12 has been amended to include the “Prior Art” designation, thereby obviating the Examiner’s objection. Accordingly, the objection is now believed to be moot and should be withdrawn.

Objections to the Claims

The Examiner has objected to claims 9 and 10 for informalities. Without agreeing to the propriety of the Examiner’s objection and solely to expedite the examination process, Applicants have amended the above claims to eliminate any possible basis for objection. Accordingly, the objection is believed to now be moot and should be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 USC §103(a)

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-3, 7 and 8 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Admitted Prior Art FIG. 12 in view of MIKKOR (U.S. Pat. No. 4,625,561).

Applicants respectfully traverse the obviousness rejections and request withdrawal of the rejections in view of the following remarks.

With respect to the obviousness rejections of claims 1-3, 7 and 8, and without in any manner, form or shape acquiescing in the propriety of any of the Examiner’s rejections applied in the present application under 35 U.S.C. §103, Applicants have canceled claim 1 without prejudice or disclaimer and have elected to rewrite indicated allowable dependent claims 4 and 6 as independent claims 4 and 6, including the features of independent claim 1. In this regard, at least because of the cancellation of claim 1, and because claims 4 and 6 have been rewritten into independent form to include all of the limitations of their base claim (independent claim 1), the

obviousness rejections of the same have now been rendered moot. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that none of the applied references disclose or render obvious all of the features of at least independent claims 4 and 6.

Applicants note that the incorporation of the features of claim 1 into claims 4 and 6 have been made solely in order to expedite and advance the present application towards allowance and explicitly does not represent any acquiescence in the propriety of any of the outstanding rejections.

With respect to the Examiner's rejection of dependent claims 2, 3, 5 and 7-18, Applicants submit that these claims are dependent from at least one of allowable independent claims 4 and 6, which are allowable for at least the reasons discussed *supra*. Thus, these dependent claims are also allowable for at least the reasons discussed *supra*. Further, all dependent claims set forth a further combination of elements neither taught nor disclosed by any of the references of record.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of each of the outstanding rejections together with an indication of the allowability of all the claims pending in the present application. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so. Accordingly, Applicants have provided a clear evidentiary basis supporting the patentability of all the claims in the present application and respectfully request an indication to such effect, in due course.

Applicants note that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance, and should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejections is made by the present amendment.

All other amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Further, Applicants wish to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of claims in the present application. In this regard, while Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication of allowability, Applicants submit that each of the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and that the basis for patentability of each of these claims is based on the combination of features recited therein.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully Submitted,
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Attachment: Replacement Sheet of Drawings

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